

Santa Barbara City Council Subcommittee on  
Homelessness and Community Relations  
Update on *Strategies to Address Community Issues Related to Homelessness in the  
City of Santa Barbara*  
December 13, 2010

The implementation of many of the *Strategies to Address Community Issues Related to Homelessness* is progressing. Below is a summary of the progress to-date for each of the 12 strategies. Now is an opportune time for the Council Subcommittee to direct its focus on the strategies they would like to continue to pursue. In addition, the consideration of citywide meal provision should be considered.

**BACKGROUND:**

June 17, 2008: City Council established a Council Subcommittee, made up of three Council members (Falcone, Francisco and Schneider), to study a range of issues related to homeless services and neighborhood impacts.

July 2008 to January 2009: Nine subcommittee meetings were held.

February 24, 2009: Council approved the *Strategies to Address Community Issues Related to Homelessness in the City of Santa Barbara (Strategies)*

March 30, 2009: Twelve-month status update presented to Council

November 9, 2010: City Council reconvenes Council Subcommittee, made up of three Council members (Mayor Schneider, Councilmember Francisco and Councilmember White) to review the progress on the implementation of the twelve recommended strategies outlined in *Strategies* and address the issue of meal provisions city-wide.

The *Strategies* include 12 recommendations organized into three interrelated categories (enforcement, intervention, and prevention) and are intended to be implemented as a package. Each of the 12 recommended strategies and to-date progress made towards their implementation are discussed below.

**STRATEGIES:**

***Recommendation #1:*** *Adoption of a City ordinance that is more restrictive on solicitation.*

In August 2009, Council amended SBMC Chapter 9.50 to prohibit "abusive panhandling" (e.g., blocking, following, threatening, and/or touching the person being panhandled) entirely within the City, with the provision that the effective date of the ordinance be delayed until the Panhandling Education and Alternative Giving Campaign was established. The amended ordinance also prohibits "active panhandling" while on a public bench or other public seating area in the 400-1200 blocks of State Street, lower

Milpas Street, or Cabrillo Boulevard between Castillo Street and Milpas Street, and actively panhandling in areas where the person being panhandled is less able to move away, such as while waiting at a bus stop or sitting at an outdoor dining establishment. Passive panhandling (e.g., holding a sign without a verbal request) is allowed under this ordinance. With Redevelopment Agency Board approval of funding in November 2009 to support the Panhandling Education and Alternative Giving Campaign, the aggressive panhandling ordinance went into effect on December 1, 2009.

- *Since that time there have been only 5 prosecutable citations issued. One significant factor is the requirement that victims of aggressive panhandling actively pursue arrest through the Citizens Arrest process. Law enforcement officers are not permitted to arrest solely on observation without active victim participation.*

***Recommendation #2:*** *Continue and expand intergovernmental cooperation to curb negative behavior.*

The Police Department, City Attorney's Office and the courts have coordinated to prosecute chronic offenders for violation of the City's open container of alcohol ordinance and other Municipal Code violations, such as aggressive panhandling, as misdemeanors instead of infractions. Similarly, those same violations will be prosecuted as misdemeanors if they occur within certain designated enforcement areas of the City.

The officers assigned to the restorative policing unit continue to divide their attention between those persons who have significant mental health/homeless issues and those who have alcoholism/homeless issues. This bifurcated approach has led to successes in assisting the worst chronic inebriates in seeking treatment. Working in cooperation with the City Attorney, District Attorney, Superior Court, County Jail Staff and Defense Attorneys, the officers have begun to better utilize incarceration time to advance detox efforts. Fostering those relationships with the homeless, the officers have arranged for and transported volunteer clients directly to area non-profit treatment centers. The Restorative Unit continues to see success in individualized attention. The greatest success comes from those individuals who have minor to moderate mental health issues and/or drug and alcohol issues.

The Restorative Policing Unit is working closely with the City Attorney to develop Help Court. Help Court is a program to dismiss minor parking and municipal offenses through the Courts as an opportunity to clear obstacles to treatment. This program is in the initial stages of development. It is being designed to allow individuals accepted into the Help Court program to enter treatment without the burden of impending fines and criminal sentences.

***Recommendation #3:*** Continue to utilize Police Department deployment strategies to best meet the immediate demands of the community.

In November 2010, the Tactical Patrol Force implemented a deployment strategy to focus greater enforcement in 5 areas that are larger than and fully encompass the identified Enforcement Zones. The areas include Upper Milpas, Lower Milpas, East Beach, West Beach and State Street. To assist in implementation of this strategy, additional officers were temporarily reassigned to the Tactical Patrol Force and each Patrol team. While the personnel reassignment is temporary, these officers will return to their teams to assist in establishing the strategy department wide.

This deployment and reporting strategy has produced significant changes in negative behavior in those areas in a short period.

The Tactical Patrol Force officers continue to provide routine enforcement of the downtown corridor, Main Library, the Waterfront area, Milpas Street, and the labor line with heavier penalties in the previously identified enforcement Zones

In Fiscal Year 2010, a retired part-time patrol officer was hired to patrol State Street. That part-time position was funded by the City's Downtown Parking Division and the Downtown Organization. The Downtown Organization will not be able to fund their half of the position next year.

***Recommendation #4:*** Implement principles of a Recovery Zone for the Milpas Area to the extent legally permissible.

In April 2009, City Police protested an enhanced liquor license application for the store at 134 S. Milpas Street, which would have allowed them to sell hard liquor. The applicant eventually withdrew their application. They were told by ABC that they would need to gain the support of the community if they wanted the license upgrade. There have been no further requests for either application or modification of liquor licenses in the Recovery Zone.

Based on the Subcommittee's recommendation, the City Council's Legislative Platform has been revised to express the City's support for state legislation to allow cities and counties to designate "Alcohol Impacted Areas" and to impose strict local review and controls on the issuance of new ABC permits within such areas.

The Police Department and the City Attorney's Office have coordinated to prosecute individuals found in possession of an open container of alcohol within the anticipated Recovery Zone for violation of a misdemeanor instead of an infraction.

***Recommendation #5:*** Encourage coordination and cooperation of street outreach teams and the Police Department to work with those on the Top 100 open container offender list.

City Police and homeless street outreach workers have met regularly since June 2009 under the coordination of the Santa Barbara County-wide 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. They have collaborated on issues such as camp cleanups, release of information forms for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996

(HIPAA) requirements, emergency parking issues and jail discharge planning. City Police now notify street outreach workers once a 72-hour clean-up notice has been posted, which allows the outreach workers time to work with people involved to offer them shelter/housing and ensure that important documents and possessions are not lost.

Most recently, this group has been working on developing a list of the 50 most vulnerable homeless persons in order to focus resources on getting them housed.

***Recommendation #6:*** *If shelter service providers wish to amend conditional use permits to allow for an increase in their year round beds for vulnerable populations (e.g. women with children, elderly, youth aging out of the foster care system, persons with medical conditions and persons on the Top 100 offender list who are ready to get off the street and into recovery), work with them and their neighbors in the amendment process to assess the potential impact on the neighborhood and identify mitigation strategies.*

On March 26, 2009, the Planning Commission approved amendments to Casa Esperanza's Conditional Use Permit to temporarily increase the year-round shelter by 40 beds (for a total of 140 beds) from April 1, 2009 through June 30, 2009, to house vulnerable populations. The Commission also allowed Casa Esperanza, with the approval of the Police Chief, the ability to increase the number of beds (up to 10%), when warranted and at the request of the Police, in order to respond to critical weather or public safety needs.

***Recommendation #7:*** *Consider using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Redevelopment Agency funds for capital improvements in the lower Milpas Street area to mitigate the impact of homelessness.*

The Community Development and Human Services Committee recommended allocating \$25,000 of the City's Fiscal Year 2011 CDBG funds to construct a six-foot high chain link fence around the bleachers and restrooms at the Cabrillo Ball Field to discourage illegal camping, drug activity and loitering. The City's Capital Improvement Program anticipates construction of pedestrian lighting and sidewalk infill on lower Milpas Street in Fiscal Year 2014, following completion of the U.S. Highway 101 improvements. This improvement project is not yet funded, but may be considered as a future Redevelopment Agency project as early as Fiscal Year 2012.

***Recommendation #8:*** *The significant need for additional detox beds is recognized and staff is directed to work with relevant agencies to help them with securing locations and funding for more detox beds and recovery beds for homeless individuals with substance abuse issues.*

The Project Recovery Detox Program, operated by the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA) at Casa Esperanza, has 12 beds for their 14-day residential detox program. Due to demand, since December 1, 2009, both dorms (six beds each) have been used for men; women needing detox are being sent to North County through a collaboration of County Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services (ADMHS), Casa

Esperanza, Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (CADA), Good Samaritan Shelter, and Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE).

A working subcommittee of the South Coast Homeless Advisory Committee continues to work on developing a plan to move the detox program from its current location at Casa Esperanza to a new location on the South Coast and possibly expand the number of available beds. The Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara and Redevelopment Agency staff has taken the lead in reviewing possible opportunity acquisitions for a new detox facility. A number of possible sites have been considered but no formal acquisition process has been initiated to date.

***Recommendation #9:*** *Continue and expand the Restorative Policing Program to work with homeless persons with mental illness.*

Although the number of restorative police officers has not expanded since February 2009, Tactical Patrol Force officers are trained in the restorative policing process. In February 2010, the Police Department hosted a Crisis Intervention class for police City officers and surrounding organizations.

***Recommendation #10:*** *Work with service providers to secure funding for relocation funds and emergency hotel vouchers and programs to help reconnect people with their families.*

In June 2009, Council approved a \$45,000 grant to Transition House for a pilot project to fund a Hotel Voucher Project (HVP) to provide safe accommodations for homeless families with children who wish to enter Transition House and participate in services but are denied entrance due lack of bed space. At the same time, due to the increased need for shelter, Transition House began a waiting list and offered those on the waiting list case management services and/or referrals as needed.

From June 2009 through June 2010, 264 families have been placed on Transition House's waiting list, 75% from the City of Santa Barbara and 87% from the County of Santa Barbara. Of the 264 families, only 8 needed to utilize hotel vouchers. Many families were able to find ways to stay off the street thanks to the waiting list. People found that they were often able to stay with a friend or continue on for a few days or more in their apartment because they have a plan—the landlord, the friend, or the family member was more willing to keep them on a little longer knowing that they would soon leave to join Transition House. All eight households entered housing after using the HVP. Prior to contacting Transition house, six of the eight clients were living in apartments; one was staying at Casa Esperanza, and one was living on the street. Approximately \$5,000 was expended for hotel vouchers.

***Recommendation #11:*** *Develop a panhandling and alternate giving campaign in collaboration with the Downtown Organization, the Conference and Visitors Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Santa Barbara Lodging and Restaurant Association, homeless service providers, the faith-based community and homeless advocates.*

In November 2009, the Redevelopment Agency Board allocated \$75,000 for the Panhandling Education and Alternative Giving Campaign (Campaign). The Campaign was launched on April 20, 2010. The Downtown Organization is implementing the Campaign and managing Surfmedia's contract to provide branding, messaging, and media relations services. The Campaign's focus to date has been to educate residents and visitors about the negative cycle of giving to panhandlers, and urging them to seek alternative forms of giving that facilitate real, positive change for very low-income individuals.

Businesses in the Campaign area continue to be encouraged to host countertop change receptacles provided by the Campaign. To date approximately 23 receptacles have been placed on business countertops in the target area. In addition a mobile giving campaign has been instituted that allows individuals to donate via the use of their cell phone by texting "ChangeSB" to 8-5-9-4-4. "Real Change Days" continue to be promoted where citizens are encouraged to patronize local businesses dedicating a percentage of their sales or a flat donation to the "Real Change, Not Spare Change" campaign. Two Real Change Days have taken place and have raised over \$3,000 for street outreach programs.

***Recommendation #12:*** *Continue looking for opportunities to assist with affordable housing projects, especially those involving permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals.*

The City is assisting three affordable housing projects that include units for permanent supportive housing for homeless persons. The Housing Authority is currently constructing Artisan Court (416–424 East Cota Street), a below market-rate rental development comprised of 56 studio units serving a mixed population of special needs individuals, homeless youth aging out of foster care, and low-income downtown workers. Construction is expected to be complete in March 2011.

The Housing Authority is also developing plans to build a below market-rate development at 512 Bath Street (also known as the Bradley property) with a mix of approximately 54 studio and one-bedroom apartment units, largely serving special needs populations, including chronic homeless, with wrap-around services. The project is on hold pending approval of a low-income housing tax credit application.